

References

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Muslim Mothering: Global Histories, Theories, and Practices

Pappano, Margaret Aziza and Dana M. Olwan, eds.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016

REVIEWED BY DANIELLE ROTH-JOHNSON

Within the current global context and throughout history, Muslim women have often been stereotyped as a silenced and monolithic group deprived of individual agency by religious strictures. Such representations often drastically oversimplify the wide-ranging and diverse situations of women in the contemporary Islamic diaspora. In order to provide a more accurate and complex account of their lives and religious views, more works written by Muslim women themselves are needed. To that end, Margaret Aziza Pappano and Dana M. Olwan's *Muslim Mothering: Local and Global Histories, Theories, and Practices* offers readers an interdisciplinary examination of the varied and complex ways Muslim mothers conceptualize and rework notions of Islamic motherhood in their daily lives. In their introduction to the edited volume, the authors say they assembled this edited collection to demonstrate "how Muslim mothers experience mothering" (3). Featuring a diverse group of contributors from around the globe tackling a wide range of topics, this collection of essays and academic studies endeavors to deconstruct stereotypes about Muslim women and mothers through works that showcase the multifaceted nature of their experiences and the challenges they face. To accomplish this task, the editors first endeavor to place the articles in their proper historical context in their introductory chapter, "Muslim Mothering: Between Sacred Texts and Contemporary Practices." In this essay, they begin by discussing the hallowed status of mothers in Islamic sacred texts and about

how the advent of Islam improved the situation of women and mothers on the Arabian Peninsula. At the same time, however, they also acknowledge that the actual lives of contemporary Muslim mothers are often at odds with long-established sacred models. Pointing out that almost all women still live in male-dominant cultures, they stress that many of the cultural conventions to which current-day Muslims adhere do not necessarily stem from Islamic principles, but from patriarchal practices that existed in those cultures before the arrival of Islam.

In order to more fully document the variety of circumstances of women in the Muslim diaspora while simultaneously focusing on issues that they face in common, the editors chose to divide the volume into five sections with the following themes: (1) Muslim mothering in the midst of war and violence, (2) the manifold ways kinship is being reconstructed in contemporary societies, (3) Muslim mothering in the diaspora, (4) reproduction and maternity in Muslim societies, and (5) a look at Muslim mothering as a form of academic inquiry.

Given the constant conflict that plagues the modern Middle East and the regions surrounding the area, the first section of the book brings together a collection of writings that focus on the challenges that Muslim mothers must face when it comes to protecting and caring for their children in contexts of war and militarization. In the first piece, “Empowered Muslim Mothering: Navigating War, Border Crossing and Activism in El-Haddad’s Gaza Mom,” for example, Nadine Sinno examines the experiences that Laila El-Haddad, a Palestinian journalist and activist, has described in her blog about her daily struggles as a mother trying to raise her son in the shadow of occupation. Sinno’s article is followed by Nouf Bazaz’s “‘God as My Witness’: Mothering and Militarization in Kashmir,” which spotlights the hardships that Kashmiri mothers must bear when male family members disappear under suspicious circumstances and their reliance upon their religious faith as a survival strategy. Finally, in “Mourning Mothers in Iran: Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Grievability and Martyrdom,” Rachel Fox reflects upon how mothers transform the private mourning of their lost children into public activism.

In the second part of the volume, the authors examine how concepts of kinship are being transformed by Muslim single mothers, adoptive mothers and co-mothers. To that end, in “Constructing Counter-Narratives of the ‘Good’ Muslim Mother in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Audrey Mouser Elegbede examines how Muslim mothers in the Malaysian capital are turning to Islam in search of what constitutes “good” mothering practices and as a source in their construction of arguments in favor of divorced mothers, who have generally been socially marginalized and stigmatized due to their marital status. The other two articles, “Between Blood and Milk, East and West: Muslim Adopt-

tive Mothering in a Transnational Context” and “Sister Mothers’: Turkish American Muslim Mothers’ and Grandmothers’ Networks in Diaspora,” analyze how women create and foster transnational kinship bonds between members of the religious community who are not related by biological ties.

The third section of the collection offers readers a glimpse into the challenges that Muslim mothers must confront in the diaspora, such as the complexities of nurturing a positive Muslim identity in their children as members of a minority within Islamophobic contexts. In these three pieces, the authors investigate how Muslim mothers are faring within such diverse locales as Canada (Ontario), Germany and the United States.

The studies in section four, “Reproduction and Maternity in Muslim Societies,” center upon social and religious constructions of motherhood in Indonesia and their impacts upon expectations of ideal family size, the confinement practices of young Malay Muslim mothers and the impact of beliefs about maternity on the reproductive health of individuals in Muslim societies.

The volume closes with a reflection on why there is a need for a theoretical approach to the study of the intersections of Islam and motherhood. Through such scholarly research, Irene Oh believes that important insights may be gained concerning the current crises confronting the world and that more may be learned about the intersections of women, gender, and religious beliefs and practices. A timely and much-needed anthology, *Muslim Mothering* offers readers an excellent variety of perspectives on all of those intersections.

Mothering in Marginalized Contexts: Narratives of Women Who Mother in and through Domestic Violence

Caroline McDonald-Harker, Ph.D.

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REVIEWED BY DIANE L. SHOOS

Research on domestic violence and on motherhood-mothering as independent topics has grown considerably in recent decades. However, despite the fact that being a mother dramatically increases the likelihood that a woman will be abused (Mirlees-Black, 1999), few studies have addressed the confluence of these two experiences, and even fewer have done so from the perspectives of abused women themselves. *Mothering in Marginalized Contexts*: